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New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 105

Human rights questions

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004

Note by the Secretary-General (A/59/525)

Draft resolution (A/59/L.43)

The President (*spoke in French*): This morning, on the occasion of Human Rights Day, the General Assembly will, in accordance with its resolution 58/181 of 22 December 2003, dedicate plenary meeting to reviewing the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004.

Today we are commemorating an event that was a milestone in the history of humanity: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its preamble enshrines the legitimate and fundamental inherent rights of every human being as a common standard to be achieved by all peoples and nations. This year, in accordance with our decision last year, the commemoration of this Day will be dedicated to human rights education. It was also agreed that we would hold a plenary meeting to mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and that we would consider initiatives aimed at enhancing such education.

Indeed, it is essential that we educate and heighten the awareness of people with regard to human rights-related issues in order to promote respect, equality, cooperation and understanding among individuals and nations. That, of course, is a long process that, like any kind of education, can be spread out over an entire lifetime.

By proclaiming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 56 years ago in its resolution 217A (III), the General Assembly was also highlighting the fundamental role played by education in the realization of those rights. In its preamble, the Declaration declares that

> "every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms".

It is in keeping with that appeal that the United Nations has redoubled its efforts to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

First of all, by establishing legal machinery in the main United Nations organs concerned, we have pledged to guarantee within our respective countries basic education, but also education about and promoting human rights. Also within the Organization — in the General Assembly, in the

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Commission on Human Rights or at many international meetings — we have unceasingly recalled the importance of such education. Thus, at the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna in 1993, it was recognized that

> "human rights education, training and public information [are] essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace". (*A/CONF.157/23, para. 78*)

The Conference also called upon all States and institutions

> "to include human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings". (*ibid., para. 79*)

Finally, we have adopted various international programmes of action, such as the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, whose Plan of Action and related guidelines encourage the development and implementation of comprehensive, effective and lasting strategies for human rights education at the national level.

Therefore, today we are commemorating the end of the Decade for Human Rights Education. When the General Assembly launched that programme 10 years ago, it urged governmental and non-governmental educational agencies, in operative paragraph 6 of its resolution 49/184,

> "to intensify their efforts to establish and implement programmes of human rights education, as recommended in the Plan of Action, in particular by preparing and implementing national plans for human rights education".

According to a general assessment, the programme of the Decade had, by its midpoint, served as a catalyst by causing Governments to respond, even though much remained to be done. It is more necessary than ever, however, to improve cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors, working in a spirit of mutual respect.

The year 2004 showed an increase of governmental activities in human rights education. However, some Governments mentioned that human rights education will remain a priority in their countries, since specific issues have not been dealt with. On the whole, the Decade was considered to be a positive mechanism that had put human rights education on the agenda as a priority issue, helped to increase public awareness of that matter and provided a framework for international cooperation in this area.

Both the proposed World Programme for Human Rights Education and the draft plan of action for its first phase, to extend from 2005 to 2007, are before us for consideration and adoption. Their endorsement by our Assembly is important for many reasons. It will reaffirm that human rights education remains a priority for the entire international community, provide a common framework for action to all relevant actors, promote support for existing programmes, provide an incentive for the development of new ones, and enhance cooperation at all levels.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that initiatives such as the closing Decade and the proposed World Programme can have an effective impact only if national and local actors use them as mobilization tools.

In opening this plenary meeting, I would like to appeal to everyone to join efforts to make human rights education a reality in our societies and a focus of our discussions in future years. Effective human rights education — which enhances respect, equality, cooperation and understanding, thereby preventing human rights abuses and conflicts — remains one of the best contributions to the achievement of a peaceful world.

I now call on the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: Every year, Human Rights Day provides us with an opportunity to review the progress we have made since the inception of the United Nations in meeting the Charter objective of encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

I think we can all agree that we have made some impressive progress. Today, largely thanks to the United Nations, a global system of human rights law is now in place. But this Human Rights Day is also an occasion to remember persisting human rights abuses around the world and to point to the enormous efforts still needed to make human rights a reality for all. It is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the essential strategy of human rights education.

Human rights education is an indispensable tool for ensuring that every individual enjoys a life of dignity; for public officials to give effect to the human rights commitments of the State; and for society as a whole to develop and nurture a culture of human rights, which is a prerequisite for harmonious and peaceful development. Human rights education covers many facets: learning our rights; learning mechanisms for their protection; developing skills for using those rights in our daily lives; and reinforcing behaviour aimed at defending and promoting them. In other words, human rights education is a people-centred and action-oriented process.

Today, as we mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, the General Assembly will look at possible future initiatives for the enhancement of human rights education worldwide. It will consider, in particular, the launch of a World Programme for Human Rights Education, to start on 1 January 2005.

For its first three years, the Programme would focus on the integration of human rights education within the primary and secondary school systems. The General Assembly has before it a draft plan of action for that first phase, prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in close consultation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as governmental and non-governmental experts and practitioners.

The draft plan draws on principles and frameworks derived from several international human rights instruments. It recognizes that the integration of human rights education into the primary and secondary school systems is a complex process requiring action on several fronts, all equally important and mutually reinforcing. Those would include developing and adopting coherent educational policies, legislation and strategies that reflect human rights principles, as well as measures to implement those policies, with the involvement of all stakeholders; ensuring that all teaching and learning processes and tools incorporate human rights principles; promoting a learning environment in which human rights are respected and upheld and in which students, teachers and parents practise human rights and solidarity in daily life; and providing the teaching profession and school leadership with the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate the learning and practice of human rights in schools.

On this Human Rights Day, I join the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in paying tribute to the many human rights educators and human rights defenders around the world who contribute day to day to building a universal culture of human rights. Those men and women do so in formal and informal settings, in small and large communities, and very often in the face of difficulties and danger. They do so both through the development of educational initiatives and by setting an example with their own human rights conduct. They should serve as an inspiration to all of us. Human rights are our common heritage and their realization depends on the contribution that each one of us is willing to make.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Australia to introduce draft resolution A/59/L.43.

Mr. Choi (Australia): The Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 endorsed the view that human rights education was essential to the promotion and achievement of stable, harmonious relations among communities and to fostering understanding, tolerance and peace. There is now broad consensus that human rights education makes a fundamental contribution to the realization of human rights and to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses.

2004 marks the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. The Decade has been an invaluable period in which many States have succeeded in bringing the need for human rights education to the forefront of human rights agendas. The Decade has increased awareness of the importance of human rights education and provided a framework for international action. It has facilitated the work of those already engaged in human rights education and encouraged others to develop relevant programmes. However, more needs to be done. Further follow-up action is necessary to build on the results of the Decade.

It is with those important goals in mind that Australia and the sponsors of today's draft resolution are introducing the draft text contained in document A/59/L.43, entitled "World Programme for Human Rights Education". The draft resolution seeks to build on the achievements of the Decade by proclaiming the World Programme for Human Rights Education, to begin on 1 January 2005. The World Programme, which incorporates targeted and shorter phases, will

lend itself to a more structured approach to human rights education, including more responsive management, coordination, review and refinement.

The first phase of the Programme, which was drafted jointly by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, focuses on a plan of action for human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems. It seeks to provide a common collective framework for action by all the relevant actors and aims to support existing human rights education programmes, highlight successful practices, and provide an incentive to develop new programmes.

The draft resolution notes with appreciation the draft plan of action, seeks Governments' views on it and recommends its early adoption by the General Assembly. We urge all Governments to move quickly to support the early adoption of the plan of action.

In addition to the sponsors listed in document A/59/L.43, the following countries have indicated that they, too, wish to co-sponsor the text: Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Uruguay.

It is particularly relevant and appropriate that we are taking action on this draft resolution on Human Rights Day during a plenary meeting to mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. Resolutions on human rights education have traditionally had strong support from the international community, reflecting the importance that is attached to maintaining an appropriate international framework for human rights education. It is our firm hope and expectation that it will again be adopted with broad support from the General Assembly.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

At the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of this building, a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, together with a copy of the United Nations Charter, was deposited inside that cornerstone. It was an act symbolizing that human rights is one of the core foundations of the United Nations. President Truman said at that ceremony:

> "The Charter plainly makes respect for human rights by nations a matter of international concern. The Member nations have learned from bitter experience that regard for human rights is indispensable to political, economic, and social progress. They have learned that disregard of human rights is the beginning of tyranny and, too often, the beginning of war."

That message is as relevant today as it was 55 years ago at the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone. The promotion and protection of all human rights is and should be a legitimate concern of the international community.

When our predecessors proclaimed the Universal Declaration, they did so with several purposes in mind. One was that every individual and every organ of society, keeping the Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive, by teaching and education, to promote respect for those rights and freedoms. Human rights education is thus clearly a primary purpose of the Declaration. The Declaration is a text meant to tell people about their inherent rights. It is therefore appropriate that, today on Human Rights Day, 56 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration, we address the issue of human rights education.

Human rights education is essential to the achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and to fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. It is essential to the promotion and protection as well as the full enjoyment of all human rights and establishing the rule of law. In a world in which everybody knows his or her rights, and in which Governments are held accountable for their actions, the chances for human rights to prevail will significantly improve.

When we proclaimed the Decade for Human Rights Education, ten years ago, we did so with article 26 of the Universal Declaration in mind:

> "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

It is perhaps fitting that that paragraph was proposed by a representative of the World Jewish Congress. Total neglect of that principle led to the horrors and barbarism of the Second World War. Human rights education is an indispensable element in any strategy to prevent racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and Islamophobia. When we commemorate, in a few months, the liberation of the concentration camps, let us remember where disregard and contempt for human rights have led to in our past. In present days, the scourge of anti-Semitism is still spreading its venom. Only by teaching tolerance, respect and mutual understanding will we be able to overcome hatred and bigotry. Only by inspiring faith in the dignity and worth of the human person and will we be able to foster universal respect for human rights. Human rights education is a key to changing attitudes and behaviour and to promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in societies.

We have come to the end of the Decade for Human Rights Education. The European Union welcomes the achievements of the Decade. Human rights education now figures prominently on our agendas. Awareness has been raised of the need for human rights education. A framework for international cooperation in that area has been provided for. Many activities have been developed at the local and national levels. School curriculums and textbooks have been revised to eliminate stereotypes and reflect human rights principles. Human rights courses and master's degree programmes have been developed. The training of law enforcement personnel in the field of human rights has been provided.

Yet many challenges remain. We still have a long way to go. We need to collect and disseminate good practices. We need to better facilitate the exchange of expertise at the national and regional levels. We need to further develop educational materials, and resources for human rights education are often too scarce.

The European Union attaches great importance to efforts at the national and regional levels to promote human rights education. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) meeting in Vienna this year on human rights education and training focused on consolidating ongoing efforts to promote human-rights education and training in the OSCE region and gave recommendations on how to improve the quality of human rights education and training.

The European Union strongly supports the Human Rights Education Youth Programme of the Council of Europe. We welcome its focus on the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We commend the Council for its manual on human rights education, directed at making human rights education accessible and useful to educators, teachers and trainers.

The European Union welcomes the proclamation today of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and commends in particular the Governments of Australia and Costa Rica for their efforts in that field. We encourage Member States to review the draft plan of action for the first phase of the World Programme with a view to its early adoption and implementation.

The European Union is particularly pleased to see the focus of the first phase of the World Programme on the primary and secondary school systems. As the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates in its article 29 (d), the education of children shall be directed to

> "[t]he preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin".

The European Union would like to express its hope that the World Programme will lead to significant and visible activities at the national and local levels. We can proclaim decades, adopt programmes of action and draft resolutions as much as we want, but if they do not result in concrete activities or lead to improvement on the ground, all our efforts will have been entirely in vain.

The European Union welcomes the leading role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the field of human rights education. The role of the Office of the

High Commissioner for Human Rights in developing training material, supporting national efforts through technical cooperation and facilitating information-sharing is indispensable. The contribution of UNESCO, including through its partnership activities with teaching and research institutions and its relations with the media, is of equal importance.

Today is Human Rights Day. We commemorate the adoption 56 years ago in Paris by we, the peoples of the United Nations, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. Still, gross violations of human rights continue to occur all over the world and today, as on any other day as well, our thoughts should be with the victims, those who are being killed, oppressed or imprisoned.

When we deposited the Universal Declaration in that cornerstone, what did we actually do? Did we really build our United Nations on the foundations of human rights, or did we just safely bury the Declaration in a place where nobody could find it? Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights Bertie Ramcharan warned the Commission on Human Rights earlier this year, saying:

> "If you ever dilute the protection role of the Commission, history's judgement will be harsh. For it is the people who suffer when there is silence in the face of atrocities".

And his words are relevant not only for the Commission, but for the entire United Nations system.

So let us teach, let us train, let us educate and let us learn. Let us create a culture of human rights where the threshold to knowing about our human rights is law and the rule of law prospers. But let us also never forget our duty to speak out for the victims and let us never fail to remember our obligation to promote and protect human rights.

Mr. Rock (Canada): I am delighted to speak today not only on behalf of Canada, but also on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network (HSN), which include Austria, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and South Africa as an observer. I will abbreviate my remarks on this rostrum, but I will circulate the full text of the agreed statement.

It is a particular honour to speak today as we observe Human Rights Day. This debate provides a welcome opportunity to reaffirm both our solid commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and our sincere belief in the fundamental importance of human rights education to the promotion and protection of human security in every sense of those words. We believe that human rights education is an essential tool for the prevention of both human rights abuses and, indeed, of conflict more generally.

Like many of my colleagues, I often have the pleasure of accompanying visitors to this wonderful building, where we visit sites of interest. Just a few yards away, there is the depiction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on a wall, and there are few places in this building that visitors find more moving. The simple power of that Declaration, of the direct language, of those plain words spelling out human rights continues to impress and to reflect important principles in which we all so deeply believe. What could be more obvious, more attractive or of greater long-term value than acting early in the lives of children to start them thinking about their own rights as individuals, the rights of others as individuals and the collective responsibility we all share to respect each other's dignity and entitlement as human beings?

It is surely in that way, through education, by promoting and advocating the rights in which we so deeply believe — the rights that we celebrate today — that we can lay the groundwork for a world where there is mutual understanding, respect and peace. Human rights education is a powerful and indispensable measure in the fight that we must all wage against discrimination, against intolerance and against racism.

In 2002, when Austria held the chairmanship of the Human Security Network, it made human rights education a thematic priority for the Network. Since then, we have taken several concrete steps in that regard. Most notably, the Human Security Network has developed a manual on human rights education that is now being used by human rights educators and students around the world to assist in raising awareness and improving basic understanding of human rights.

In the Graz Declaration, Network members agreed to advance human rights training programmes held locally, nationally and regionally, and to support an increase in the number of human rights educators at the national level. Most importantly, perhaps, the Graz Declaration stressed the need for the overall coordination of all efforts concerning United Nations

education and public information programmes with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

(*spoke in French*)

We believe that human rights education is a lifelong undertaking. Under the coordination of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and with the particular support of Costa Rica, the administrators of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education developed important new programming and, most importantly, built a concrete foundation upon which work on human rights education can continue to develop. In that regard, we take this opportunity to welcome the proclamation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, scheduled to begin on 1 January 2005. The draft plan of action for the first phase of the Programme has been jointly prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. We encourage States to carefully review its recommendations for human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems with a view to their adoption and implementation as soon as possible.

Lastly, the members of the Human Security Network reaffirm their support for the continued commitment by the United Nations to promote human rights and human rights education.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Chile, who will speak on behalf of the Community of Democracies.

Mr. Rehren (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, comprised of the Czech Republic, India, the Republic of Korea, Mali, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, the United States of America and Chile.

First of all, I wish to read out a statement issued by the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies on the occasion of Human Rights Day.

> "The Convening Group of the Community of Democracies joins in the celebration of Human Rights Day on 10 December 2004. The principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are the cornerstone of a peaceful, secure and prosperous world. These values, which constitute a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, are central to democratic governance and are best protected by Governments that are fully committed to the rule of law.
>
> "The Community of Democracies recognizes the fundamental importance of all human rights and the reinforcing mutual effects of and interdependence among peace, development, democracy and human rights. In both the Warsaw Declaration and the 2002 Seoul Plan of Action, Community of Democracies countries have committed themselves to strengthening the development of democratic institutions throughout the world and to promoting and protecting all human rights, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On Human Rights Day, these Community of Democracy nations commend all nations that have worked hard to build democracies and to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. They recommit themselves to the development of democracy domestically and the promotion of democracy regionally and globally in order to adhere to the principles laid out in that important Declaration." (*A/59/598, annex*)

I would also like to inform the General Assembly that the text of this statement has been issued today in Geneva, in the capitals of the countries of the Convening Group and in the capitals of other participants in the Community of Democracies. It also has been published as United Nations document A/59/598.

Mr. Baykadamov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me to extend to you and to the entire General Assembly our congratulations on the occasion of Human Rights Day. Through the annual observance of this occasion, the international community is becoming more and more convinced of the increasing attention paid by people everywhere to human rights as a precondition of their lives in freedom and to this important legacy of civilization, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We have just concluded the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, one of the major and important programmes sponsored by the United Nations. For Kazakhstan, as for other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Decade

coincided with the period of consolidation of our national independence and State sovereignty and the reform of our social, economic and political system. During those years, the way of life and the outlook of many of our citizens underwent radical change. Their own experience has convinced them of the advantages of a free economy, the rule of law and democracy.

Reforms initiated by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan have already borne fruit. Thanks to those reforms, the process of developing a self-regulating, open and democratic society in Kazakhstan has become irreversible. The State is currently carrying out a step-by-step democratization of society and is trying to instil in its citizens a culture of respect for human rights. A reform of the judiciary, proposed by the head of State, is being implemented, providing for the introduction of a jury system, and an indefinite moratorium on the death penalty has been put into effect. Realizing that human rights should first become an integral part of the culture of any society, we did not force the process of their universal acceptance; instead, we chose to gradually raise awareness about human rights among the population.

Kazakhstan's accession to fundamental international human rights instruments adopted under the auspices of the United Nations has facilitated that effort. Our country has become a party to the International Covenants on Human Rights and is completing the process of their ratification. Kazakhstan has already assumed its reporting obligations under those instruments, and a National Interdepartmental Commission on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law has been established. The Commission monitors implementation of the United Nations recommendations on human rights and promotes awareness of international human rights treaties.

In addition, a broad-based educational campaign is targeting public servants. Principles and norms established in United Nations human rights conventions have been integrated into Kazakhstan's legislation. The State entitles everyone to know his or her rights, thus reaffirming the right to human rights education, as enshrined in the constitution of our country.

Kazakhstan is fulfilling one of the most important requirements introduced by the General Assembly concerning the circulation of the texts of international human rights treaties. These are published as separate editions and posted on the official web sites of governmental bodies. A State strategy is now in place to make a human rights course a part of school and university curricula.

Kazakhstan fully supports the provision in the fifth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/59/L.43, that human rights education is a long-term and lifelong process. We are convinced that respect for the dignity of every person can be ensured only through continued educational activities throughout the entire lives of people. In this context, we support the work in the area of human rights education performed by the regional office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Central Asia.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become reliable partners of our State in their informal work in the area of human rights education. Thanks to their experience in this area, Kazakhstan's NGOs have developed the country's first concept of civic education. Today, educational activities are being carried out by Government bodies and national human rights institutions in partnership with non-governmental organizations.

The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman is actively involved in the process of human rights education. A major international conference on human rights education was held in November of 2004, with the participation of the national Ombudsman. The participants in the conference made an unbiased assessment of Kazakhstan's efforts to implement the goals of the Decade that has just concluded and presented recommendations on the ways to improve the quality of that education and make it systematic. An interdepartmental body on education, with the participation of non-governmental organizations, and a human rights education centre under our commissioner for human rights are being set up.

Human rights education is a process that is ongoing at many levels. Such education can become a reliable mechanism for preventing discrimination based on sex, language or religion. Today, Kazakhstan is taking every possible step to provide its population with information and knowledge about the nature and values of human rights and about ways to protect them.

The country is undergoing an active process of political modernization of our society, as the head of

State pursues a policy of decentralizing public administration through the division of responsibilities among the various levels of power. A national commission on democracy and civil society was established in November of 2004. A few days ago, some important events took place, signalling a new stage of political reforms in Kazakhstan: decrees were signed on phased elections of the heads of local governments and on broader human rights protection powers of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has now been given power to request a review of court decisions, institute criminal proceedings or seek other ways to ensure accountability and initiate parliamentary hearings.

The Decade that is now over has become for Kazakhstan a decade characterized by the first informed decisions on human rights education. The objective of these efforts, supported by the United Nations and national non-governmental organizations, is to build a State characterized by the rule of law, with human rights as its highest value. The work to develop human rights education in our country has not been completed. Kazakhstan will move ahead to promote the rule of law in society through improved human rights education.

We support the draft plan of action for the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and we will do everything possible to implement it in our country.

Mr. Xie Bohua (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): It is of special significance for the General Assembly to discuss human rights education today, on Human Rights Day.

The Chinese delegation has taken note of the evaluation report on the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education submitted by the High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.4/2004/93) and the draft plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the proposed World Programme for Human Rights Education (A/59/525) and would like to make the following observations on the question of human rights education.

First, we highly value the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and its Plan of Action. Thanks to the untiring efforts during the Decade to promote human rights education, the United Nations has enhanced worldwide respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, fostered understanding, tolerance and friendship among different racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups and nations, and facilitated people-centred sustainable development and social justice. Over the past ten years, the international community has become increasingly aware of the important role of human rights education as one of the fundamental ways to achieve human rights. Comprehensive, effective and sustainable strategies on human rights education have been formulated and implemented at the national level, bearing in mind each country's specific conditions.

Secondly, we support the proclamation and implementation by the United Nations of the proposed World Programme for Human Rights Education. As the High Commissioner rightly pointed out in her evaluation report, there have been both achievements and shortcomings in the Decade. Building on the experiences of the Decade, the United Nations should further promote the development of human rights education throughout the world. In accordance with the relevant resolution of the Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have jointly prepared the draft plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the proposed World Programme for Human Rights Education. We appreciate the efforts made by the OHCHR and UNESCO and will study in detail the draft plan of action.

Thirdly, we believe that the following principles should guide us in the promotion of human rights education. First of all, human rights education needs to take full account of the historical traditions and social context of the country concerned and to encourage and fully develop positive cultural traditions, respect diversity and fight discrimination. Secondly, human rights education should cover a wide spectrum of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development, with a view to seeking a balanced development of all human rights. Thirdly, national Governments bear the primary responsibility for human rights education, while the international community has the obligation to provide necessary assistance and guidance. Fourthly, human rights education is a long-term, multidimensional endeavour, and continuous and unremitting efforts are therefore needed to widely disseminate the concept of human rights so that it can take hold in society.

Human rights education assumes special significance for the Chinese Government, as China is the most populous country in the world. In the context of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, the Chinese Government has, during the past ten years, conducted a wide array of educational activities in the field of human rights education in the light of China's specific conditions.

At the national level, a five-year legal literacy plan has been developed and put in place in an effort to raise awareness among Chinese citizens of the Constitution, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

In China's school systems, international human rights instruments have been taken into account in designing and teaching human rights education curricula, focusing on a rights-based approach to the rule of law and the dissemination of the basic concept of human rights.

At the international level, in addition to bilateral cooperation, human rights education has been incorporated into the framework of technical cooperation between China and OHCHR, under which a series of programmes were undertaken.

Today, as Chinese citizens are increasingly aware of their rights, the concept of human rights is taking root in China. The Chinese Government is ready to join the United Nations and all other countries to build upon the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and to further human rights education at both the national and the international levels with a view to promoting a culture of human rights.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Perhaps even more so than other areas of United Nations activities, the area of human rights is marked by a significant gap between standards and implementation: On the one hand, we can proudly look back at very impressive achievements in setting human rights standards over the past few decades. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose adoption we commemorate today, was a major achievement in itself and the source of inspiration for developing the core human rights instruments elaborated thereafter.

On the negative side, we still live in a world where human rights violations are commonplace and are committed in all regions of the world. While the struggle to uphold respect for human rights has always been difficult, recent trends to justify the curtailing of human rights, inter alia in the context of fighting terrorism have rendered the task even more difficult.

Human rights education, to which today's commemoration is dedicated, can play a significant part in reducing the gap in implementing human rights standards. Indeed, only if human rights are known, understood and taught, can human rights also be practised. The Decade on Human Rights Education, which followed up on an important provision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself, has had a strong catalytic effect in helping individuals worldwide understand human rights and to claim and apply them in their daily lives.

Particular efforts should be directed to the sensitization of professionals. In the social field and in education, professionals act as multipliers because they are able to reach many people. In other areas, such as law enforcement, training in human rights is essential in order to prevent human rights violations and promote understanding and awareness of human rights. Liechtenstein has only recently adopted a new school curriculum, in which human rights constitute one of the core principles and has begun holding human rights information sessions in different departments of its national administration.

The Decade was a good beginning and a point of departure for the work ahead. Clearly, we still have a long way to go. Sharing of best practices and exchange of expertise are essential tools in further advancing our efforts in the field of human rights education. Regional cooperation seems to be an especially useful tool in achieving those goals, and we commend the efforts that have been undertaken in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe. In that connection special reference should be made to the Human Rights Youth Education Programme adopted by the Council of Europe.

We warmly welcome the adoption of the World Programme for Human Rights Education on the occasion of Human Rights Day — today — and express our gratitude to the Governments of Australia and Costa Rica for their work on that project. Our authorities will review the draft plan of action for the first phase of the World Programme, and we hope that numerous other States will do the same.

Human rights education can thus make a significant contribution to bridging the implementation gap in the field of human rights if States are committed to a long-term engagement in that respect and if reliable funding is provided. However, we must also take other measures to make human rights a reality and to ensure that legal commitments are translated into the daily enjoyment of human rights by people worldwide.

One indispensable change concerns our intergovernmental work. There can be no doubt that the way in which we tackle human rights, both in the Commission on Human Rights — the principal human rights body of the United Nations — and in the Third Committee of the Assembly, requires radical overhaul. The current debates and discussion on human rights are very often politically charged and complicated, but at the same time often concern issues other than human rights. This must not be the case. Only in changing the approach to our own human rights work can we ensure that human rights issues are placed at the core of the United Nations agenda and treated as a truly cross-cutting issue.

We therefore welcome the strong emphasis that the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change places on the area of human rights in general, as well as the fact that the Panel has agreed on bold suggestions as to the restructuring of United Nations work in that area. We do not think that the relevant recommendations offer a magical solution to all the problems that we have to discuss — nor were they intended to do so — but we certainly believe that they offer an excellent point of departure for the creative and innovative measures that are needed to reinvigorate the human rights machinery of the United Nations.

Mrs. Tomar (India): This year, International Human Rights Day commemorates the fifty-sixth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the eleventh anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. We focus our attention today on the theme of human rights education.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, through its article 26, provides the foundation for human rights education. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action acknowledged human rights education as an important pillar for the promotion and protection of human rights. Human rights education, training and public information have been recognized as essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.

The General Assembly, which proclaimed the first United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education by its resolution 49/184, affirmed that human rights education should involve more than the provision of information and that it should constitute a comprehensive life-long process of instilling respect for the dignity of others in everyone.

Education for all, elimination of illiteracy and wide-spread dissemination of information on human rights, combined with targeted human rights education for key groups such as the armed forces, police, judges, lawyers, trade union leaders and non-governmental organizations are indispensable elements of any effective strategy to promote human rights. The Vienna Declaration, recognizing that aspect, called upon States to pay special attention to developing specific national programmes and strategies for ensuring the widest human rights education. It also called for the proclamation of a United Nations decade for human rights education, in order to promote, encourage and focus those educational activities.

While the importance of human rights education is widely accepted, action is still wanting in most areas. Human rights continue to be perceived through the behaviourist prism of condemnation and punishment rather than promotion. Human rights education offers considerable scope for bringing the international community together in a collective endeavour. Therefore, it needs to be taken up as a priority activity.

The Secretary-General's note (A/59/525) presents to Member States for their consideration a draft plan of action for the first phase of the proposed world programme for human rights education. We shall study the draft plan of action carefully.

Meanwhile, the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, referenced in the Secretary-General's report, provides reflections on the achievements and shortcomings of the Decade that has just been completed. We agree that one of the significant achievements of the Decade is that it has put human rights education on the agenda. It has helped to increase awareness of the need for human

rights education and provided a framework for international cooperation in that area. Several shortcomings and challenges have been identified in the report, including the need for developing appropriate methodologies for human rights education, developing effective coordination mechanisms and frameworks for human rights education at all levels and — very importantly — the lack of human and financial resources to implement human rights education programmes, as well as the lack of political will on the part of the responsible authorities.

The relationship between democracy and human rights is well established. We believe that a sound democratic tradition that promotes respect for pluralism, diversity and tolerance goes a long way in ensuring the success of our efforts in human rights education. Democratic institutions and people's participation in the political and developmental processes through those institutions would guarantee the success of such efforts.

Our own national experience bears that out. In India, the idea of human rights is embodied in the Constitution, which was adopted in 1950 soon after India's independence. The Constitution promotes and protects the human rights of the people of India. Thus far, human rights education has been integrated into diverse subjects at different stages of education through India's education policy.

However, recognizing the need for further action in that area, the Government of India established an Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee, under the chairmanship of the Home Secretary. The Committee adopted a national action plan for human rights education, which was drawn up in cooperation with the National Human Rights Commission, an autonomous institution mandated to promote human rights literacy and awareness under the Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993. The Committee also oversees implementation of the Action Plan, which consists of strategies for raising awareness about human rights, promoting social empowerment through attitudinal change and sensitizing specific target groups such as students, law enforcement officials, justice system officials and parliamentarians. Specific time-bound action plans have been drawn up for raising public awareness, for promoting human rights education in educational institutions at various levels, for sensitization programmes for Government officials and parliamentarians, and for training for officials in law enforcement and the administration of justice.

The Government has undertaken several initiatives in the secondary and higher education sector, including the introduction of courses in human rights education in 26 universities; the establishment of a curriculum revision committee to revise textbooks; the development of a number of training modules for teachers and educators in English, Hindi and regional languages by the National Council for Teacher Education; the provision of financial assistance by the University Grants Commission to universities and colleges for the development of specific courses in human rights; and the establishment of a special body to play the nodal role in the promotion of human rights education through distance education. In India, the subject of human rights has been introduced as a part of school curriculum in all 18 official languages.

Furthering human rights education is a multi-institutional task. In India, the work of the Government, both in the states and at the national level, is supported by the active involvement and participation of the National Human Rights Commission. We have also enlisted the active involvement of non-governmental organizations, human rights research and training institutions, grassroots organizations, voluntary social organizations, professional associations and other active civil society organizations in this national endeavour.

My delegation is a sponsor of draft resolution A/59/L.43 entitled, "World Programme for Human Rights Education". We would like to thank the main sponsor, Australia, for their efforts in presenting the draft resolution. The resolution will ensure that the work started in the first decade on human rights education will gather further momentum in the second decade. Our sponsorship of the draft resolution is a demonstration of the importance that India attaches to that subject.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action noted that resource constraints and institutional inadequacies may impede the immediate realization of the objectives set out. In his message for Human Rights Day 2000, during the midterm review of the Decade, the Secretary-General noted that there was

> "a long way to go. Only a few countries have developed effective national strategies for human

rights education. There is a big gap between the promises made under the Decade and the resources actually committed".

We agree with the Secretary General's comment that

"Human rights education is much more than a lesson in schools or a theme for a day; it is a process to equip people with the tools they need to live lives of security and dignity".

Security and dignity cannot be achieved on empty stomachs, where situations of extreme poverty, hunger and deprivation become the primary concern. Strengthened international cooperation for poverty eradication remains a key ingredient for promoting and protecting human rights, and for promoting human rights education.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Resolution 58/181 of 22 December 2003 invites States to develop comprehensive, participatory and sustainable strategies for human rights education, and to make knowledge of human rights a main objective of their education policies. That resolution, adopted one year before the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, has shown that our efforts in that area must not be limited in terms of time. That is why the General Assembly has decided to hold this plenary meeting not just to take stock of the Decade, but also to consider activities that could be undertaken in the future.

The gains made in the human rights area have multiplied during this Decade now coming to a close. Indeed, best practices for governance in the political, economic and social spheres have spread to all continents and regions of the world. Democratic processes are taking root in Africa in a lasting way. Regional legal instruments in the area of human rights in general, and the rights of women and children and migrants in particular, have further strengthened the international legal arsenal that we have had since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided us, in 1948, with a foundation.

Despite those gains, however, we must recognize that serious violations of fundamental rights persist, especially in situations of conflict. Examples abound. They range from the denial of economic, social, civil and political rights to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including sexist violence; they range from trafficking in human beings, including children, to the pure and simple deprivation of the right to life.

Faced with that situation, my delegation believes that the international community has two significant tools for ensuring respect for human rights where they are violated on a massive scale.

One of those tools is the use of punishment to deal with serious human rights violations. In that respect, my delegation is pleased by the entry into force of the Rome Statute. That instrument acts as a strong deterrent because of the imprescriptible nature of Government action.

However, the effects of punishment are limited as it affects only the perpetrator of the crime, or at most his or her accomplices. Moreover, punishment affects only human rights violations that are criminal in nature. For instance, punishment is not imposed on those who, intentionally or otherwise, deprive a person or group of persons of economic, social, civil or political rights.

That is why my delegation feels that the tool of punishment must be accompanied by another tool which has much greater scope: education and raising public awareness about best practices in the area of human rights.

The second tool covers all aspects of human rights. Moreover, it has the advantage of being preventive. It concerns persons who should be able to enjoy rights but who are often simply unaware of their existence. It equally concerns persons who should allow others to exercise their right but who do not understand how to do so or who themselves actively abuse the rights of others.

This process will take a long time. It will take place through the inclusion of the topic of human rights in formal and informal educational curricula and through public awareness campaigns such as that set out in the draft action plan for 2005 to 2007, a new World Programme for human rights education, which will be launched in January 2005 by the United Nations. The Government of Mali will study that draft with a view toward implementing it. My delegation is also a sponsor of draft resolution A/59/L.43, initiated by Australia and Costa Rica.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which was adopted in Nairobi in June 1981, stipulates in article 25 that all its States parties have the

duty to promote and ensure, by means of education and the dissemination of information, respect for rights and freedoms. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of July 1990 calls, in article 11, paragraph 2, for children's education that encourages respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The African protocol on women's rights adopted in Maputo in July 2003, in article 12, paragraph e, calls upon States to integrate the gender dimension and to provide education in human rights at all levels of teaching, including in teacher's training programmes. These efforts in theoretical education must be accompanied by the establishment of practical mechanisms for evaluation and the ongoing adoption of programmes.

Mali, above and beyond the integration of human rights into education as a part of teaching programmes, has set up practical mechanisms for a better understanding of human rights. This includes the National Consultative Commission on human rights, and the position of national mediator, as well as the National Committee for equal access to State media. Moreover, Mali hosts three of the six cities in Africa participating in the programme to implement human rights education in schools.

In addition, our Democratic Question Time is a unique programme that gives citizens an opportunity to pose questions to the executive branch of the Government on the day of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This process addresses every category of grievances related to violations of individual and collective human rights.

My country supports the values and principles promoted by the Human Security Network and the Community of Democracies. That is why we endorse the statements made on behalf of these bodies by the representatives of Canada and Chile.

To conclude, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the People's Movement for Human Rights Education for its unconditional commitment to education on human rights.

Mr. López Clemente (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly summons us to celebrate Human Rights Day and promote a comprehensive understanding of the issue within national educational systems. This is a noble task, if it truly aims at spreading, promoting and implementing all human rights, as agreed in the Vienna Declaration and in Programme of Action, in order to encourage dialogue under the guiding principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity, as well as the universality of human rights, in full harmony with the diversity of cultures and of political, economic and social systems. It is a noble task if we do not close our eyes to the global social situation in which we live, for it is in everyday life that all those rights are made real and not on the shelves where legal instruments are kept.

The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, considered that human rights education, training and public information are indispensable to establishing and promoting stable and harmonious relations between communities and to fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. Nevertheless, how can we ensure this atmosphere of harmony when, according to the most recent United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) data, a billion girls and boys live in poverty worldwide? How can we make sure that new generations know their rights, when more than 140 million children have never attended school?

Because of poverty, more than 16 per cent of the children under 5 years of age in developing countries suffer from serious malnutrition, whereas one out of every five — that is, approximately 400 million — have no access to drinking water. The effects of poverty extend to healthcare services, from which 270 million minors are excluded, and to housing, to which 640 million children do not have access.

The situation, however, is not exclusive to developing countries, since in large parts of the developed world, childhood poverty increased or was only reduced by a small percentage. All of this creates deplorable phenomena, including the growth of commercial sexual exploitation. Around 1.2 million children are victims of this trade every year, and 2 million, mostly girls, are subjected to sexual exploitation. Is it possible for us to maintain passive attitudes about this situation when we see that, in contrast, almost a billion dollars are spent annually on weapons of war?

In addition, if violence continues to be promoted in many of the widely-disseminated forms of media, distorting the realities of other countries and stigmatizing certain cultures, religious practices and political and social systems, it will be very difficult to fulfil the agreements reached in Vienna.

Genuine international cooperation cannot be postponed, and it must not only include policy formulation and best practices. It must also be aimed at guaranteeing a better environment for the economic and social development of developing countries, in compliance with the commitment of developed economies to earmark 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance (ODA), a commitment that only a few have reached. The exhausting external debt must be paid and the whole spectrum of environmental and other kinds of problems currently affecting societies must be addressed. The outcome of any plan of action, such as the one elaborated by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and submitted to us for comments, will be limited in its scope if the unjust international order we currently endure remains unchanged.

The Government of the Republic of Cuba assigns the greatest importance to the full realization of its citizens' human right to education. A quality education that fully respects cultural identities and which instils values and principles that stimulate solidarity, social justice, mutual respect, love of homeland and deep knowledge of the historical, cultural and artistic heritage of humanity and of their people's customs, have been dependable guidelines in the development of the educational system in Cuba since the triumph of the revolution.

In 1953, the island had barely 6.5 million inhabitants. Of these, more than half a million children did not have schools and more than 2 million people were fully or functionally illiterate. Only half of the population in school achieved a high school education. Ten thousand teachers were unemployed and approximately 550 thousand children from 6 to 14 years of age — that is, almost half — did not attend school. The population over 15 years old had an average educational level under the third grade. One of the first revolutionary measures was the elimination of illiteracy and the creation of conditions to guarantee universal, free and quality education at all educational levels, which has been clearly reflected in Cuba's achievements in this field. In terms of our educational advances, Cuba has already reached the goals outlined by UNESCO for 2015.

Independently from these results and in order to continue improving the Cuban educational system, new pedagogical strategies have been developed that have further encouraged principals, professors and students, as leading agents of educational change. In order to continue developing education and implementing the new strategies, the Cuban State has allocated 3.825 billion pesos for education within the 2004 budget.

The Cuban people have, to the extent to which they are able, collaborated with other peoples from developing countries in the field of education. More than 17,000 young people from more than 110 countries study various specialties in the island, most of them at the higher level. Cuba has offered UNESCO a project of 20 annual scholarships, which has been agreed upon and is under review and implementation. The project will begin in 2004 and is aimed at countries in the African continent with possible expansion to other regions of the world.

Cuba has also proposed support for a universal literacy programme, in which Cuba's share would represent a significant percentage of the technology and specialized personnel that would be required. It would only be necessary to mobilize a minute amount of the global financial resources in circulation. This would not exceed 0.01 per cent of the GDP of the OECD countries. Through this proposed programme, in twelve years it would be possible to ensure that some 1.5 billion who are now illiterate or semi-literate would become literate.

Cuba's efforts have been carried out in spite of more than 45 years of the genocidal unilateral blockade imposed on our country and strengthened through new measures announced by the Government of the United States on 6 May 2004 and put into effect on 30 June 2004.

No one doubts that human rights education contributes to the full realization of all human rights and has a significant impact on tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples and nations of the world. However, it is of vital importance in this process for new generations to understand that the creation of a social and international order in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully effective is not just a right proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also a vital necessity for humanity. Only in this way will solidarity become a universal value.

Mr. Esipila (Kenya): The Decade for Human Rights Education provides us with an important common framework to focus on the development and strengthening of educational programmes at the national, regional and international levels.

Kenya considers education as a fundamental human right, set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Human Rights Covenants. It is in this view that my Government is pursuing the goal of education for all as one of its top priorities. We have embarked on a bold step to implement a national programme of free and compulsory education, which has witnessed an unprecedented increase in primary school enrolment. In the financial year 2004-2005, the education sector received the largest budgetary allocation of all sectors.

There is a clear correlation between poverty, education and development. Poverty continues to ravage the people of sub-Saharan Africa, a situation exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As an empowerment right, education is a primary vehicle by which those who are economically and socially marginalized can emancipate themselves from poverty and participate fully in their communities. My delegation strongly believes that individuals can exercise none of the civil, political, economic and social rights until they have received a certain minimum education. The human right to education is linked to other fundamental human rights: rights that are universal, indivisible, interconnected and interdependent, including the human right to equality between men and women and to equal partnership in the family and society.

The role of human rights education in conflict prevention and management is undisputed. We recall that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights, stated that human rights education, training and public information are essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.

Kenya is fully committed to upholding human rights principles and has subsequently put in place administrative and legislative implementation measures, including the introduction of human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and the rule of law into the curriculum of learning institutions. The subject is also fully included in the training of corrections officers and law enforcement personnel. The National Commission on Human Rights was established last year by an act of Parliament to provide for the better promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission is a watchdog to oversee and report on the activities of the Government and its relationship with the general populace. Its functions include investigation of complaints on its own initiative or upon receipt of complaints of human rights violations. It also acts as the Government's chief agent in implementing international human rights standards, educating the public in non-formal settings on human rights, and formulating, implementing and overseeing human rights programmes. In addition, a new Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs was created with a mandate to handle human rights issues to spearhead Government efforts to foster educational dialogue as a basis of building a sustainable human rights culture in all facets of the Kenyan society.

We call for international cooperation and support in the strengthening of our national and regional capacities for human rights education. Before I conclude, I sincerely thank all our development partners for their support towards the realization of free and compulsory primary education in Kenya. It is through human rights education that we recognize the legitimacy and full potential of every human being and group. It is a worthy goal to implement and support.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): It is our shared understanding that each and every State bears a responsibility for taking effective measures to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. In order to realize a society in which the human rights of each and every person are respected, it is essential to ensure the understanding of individual members of society that they must respect the human rights of others.

In this regard, we firmly believe that human rights education, in which everyone learns tolerance and respect for others, is of great importance for building a decent society. Of course, in order to be effective, such human rights education needs to be provided on a lifelong basis and with a long-term perspective. In this era of globalization and diversification, human rights education is also important in fostering and promoting understanding among different people and cultures. In the long run,

we believe this is the way to advance international peace and cooperation.

On this occasion, let me describe my country's efforts and the progress we have made under the Decade for Human Rights Education, which is now about to conclude. In December 1995, the Government of Japan established a national executive headquarters, headed by the Prime Minister, to implement and promote the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. In July 1997, it elaborated and published its national action plan for the Decade — becoming the third United Nations Member State to do so, which is a clear indication of the seriousness with which my country has addressed the subject. Our national plan was submitted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in November of that year.

Japan's national plan of action is based on the idea that human rights education must be promoted by all means and in all venues available. Guidelines and specific advice are provided for education in school, communities, businesses and corporations and for specific vocational training for professions in which special attention to human rights is required. The action plan also addresses the issues faced by women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. It deals with the issues of discrimination and prejudice against minorities, foreigners, persons infected with HIV/AIDS and other contagious diseases and persons released from prison.

The national headquarters has undertaken periodic reviews and follow-up since 1998, identifying achievements and further challenges in various areas and at various levels. Local autonomous bodies in Japan have also established head offices to follow the national action plan. Through those steps, and through active participation at all levels of society including at the grassroots level, effective and steadfast implementation of the national action plan has been secured.

We are pleased to observe the successful conclusion of the Decade, which has played a significant role in raising awareness of the importance of human rights education and has encouraged national and international efforts in that field. However, as I stated earlier, human rights education is a long-term process, and much remains to be done to implement human rights education programmes. We therefore welcome the launching of the World Programme for Human Rights Education as an important follow-up to the Decade that will help maintain and further develop implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors. As a matter of fact, Japan has become a sponsor of the draft resolution on the World Programme.

My delegation sincerely hopes that the General Assembly will adopt the resolution by consensus and be able to proclaim the World Programme for Human Rights Education on the occasion of Human Rights Day. In that regard, we highly commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNESCO for their work in preparing the draft plan for the first phase of the World Programme, which focuses on primary and secondary school systems. It is also encouraging to learn that a United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee composed of OHCHR, UNESCO and other institutions will be set up to follow up the Programme. We believe it will further facilitate international coordination of the relevant activities.

Japan would like to reaffirm its determination to continue its efforts to promote human rights education in cooperation with the international community, in particular the United Nations and its relevant bodies, with a view to creating a world in which each and every person is fully respected, without discrimination or distinction of any kind.

Ms. Al-Qassimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we are observing the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, which aims at promoting and encouraging respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all human beings without discrimination on the basis of race, gender, language or religion. Before this international gathering, I would like to commend the United Nations and its organs for their efforts over past years and to take this opportunity to remind the international community that more efforts are needed at the national, regional and international levels to achieve our common goal of improving international human rights conditions.

In past years, attention was focused on developing international standards and mechanisms for common moral and legal frameworks that would put the question of human rights and human dignity in the forefront of the human values that guide all nations

regardless of their cultural or historical differences. To achieve peace and development, we must ensure the full enjoyment of freedom and equality, promote the principles of tolerance and the sharing of responsibility and ensure respect for nature.

In spite of all efforts made in that regard, flagrant and hideous violations of human rights, including racial discrimination, violence against the most vulnerable sectors of society — including women, children, the handicapped and the elderly — murder, extrajudicial killings and detentions continue to occur in many regions of the world. The main reasons for those violations include poverty, illiteracy, internal conflicts and wars.

As the international measures taken so far to combat that phenomenon are no longer adequate, we must strengthen our cooperation at all levels in encouraging and promoting public awareness of human rights. The culture and the heritage of nations should be used as an essential instrument for promoting and consolidating human rights in the collective consciousness of society.

I would like to commend the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the efforts to provide the Member States with information, technical assistance and training needed for human rights education. The United Arab Emirates welcomes the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council on proclaiming the World Programme for Human Rights Education, to begin on 1 January 2005.

Although the United Arab Emirates has existed for only three decades, it has created a set of laws for regulating human rights as a top priority in its national policy, based on Islam, which is the main source for protecting human rights. The Government has worked to highlight this part of our true religion, which calls for the protection of human rights and the consolidation of its principles among its nationals.

The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates affirms the right of all citizens to equality, social justice, security and equal opportunity. It also defines the special rights of children and mothers and provides protection for minors and care for the handicapped and the elderly. The right to education and health care was granted to all citizens of the country.

The United Arab Emirates has signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Government has accordingly adapted its national laws and legislation in order to fulfil its international obligations. It has also changed the structure of some government institutions and introduced new posts in the areas of civil service and the protection of human rights in hospitals, police stations and corrective institutions in order to enhance public awareness among segments of society that are most vulnerable to violence.

As part of its efforts to promote the culture of human rights in the country, the Government has incorporated the basics of human rights in the curricula of schools, law schools, police academies and army schools. Seminars and conferences are also being organized on relevant subjects such as international humanitarian law, human rights, trafficking in persons and care to victims of crimes and violence.

The principles of human rights are not new. They are deeply rooted and represent a heritage of high values that call for the preservation of the cultures and the beliefs of peoples. It also calls for assisting countries to achieve development without affecting their political independence, interfering in their internal affairs or imposing reforms from outside. Human rights must emerge from the social values and principles of peoples. The international community must ensure respect for national cultures, religions and particularities and for diversity and encourage peoples to develop legacies of ideas and innovation for future generations.

While the United Arab Emirates notes the activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information in the field of human rights, we urge that those activities be expanded so as to be able to uncover facts relating to violations of human rights that are committed in circumstances of occupation, war and during the process of terminating colonization. That includes the crimes committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, which constitute an abrogation of Israel's commitment to the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

In conclusion, in order to affirm the importance and validity of human rights principles, it is essential for the international community to ensure the

neutrality, impartiality and non-selectivity of international resolutions regarding issues of human rights. Also, democratic practices must be enhanced in that process in order to strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of those resolutions and to ensure their conformity with the international judicial system, including legislation, judgements and legal opinions issued by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Mr. Ghafari (United States of America): Today, on the occasion of Human Rights Day, we join the rest of the global community in commemorating the fifty-sixth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Wrought from the horrors of the Second World War, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted to enshrine universally recognized principles of equality and justice, known as "human rights through law". In commemorating this day, we reaffirm our commitment to those principles. We celebrate the advances that have been made since then to create a world where human dignity is respected and individual freedom is championed.

It is therefore appropriate that today we also review the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and emphasize the important role of human rights education for the advancement of those rights. Human rights education contributes toward preventing human rights violations, promoting equality, and enhancing participation in democratic processes.

Support for the protection of fundamental human rights is one of the foundations of United States foreign policy. The lessons of the past are clear: the enjoyment of human rights helps secure the peace, deters aggression, promotes the rule of law, combats crime and corruption, strengthens democracies, and prevents humanitarian crises. Conversely, regimes that violate the human rights of their citizens are more likely to disrupt the peace and security of countries in their region. The best guarantor of security and prosperity at home and abroad is respect for individual liberty and the protection of human rights through good governance and the rule of law. The United States proudly supports the Community of Democracies, which has emphasized the interdependence between peace, development, democracy and human rights. The United States delegation is also pleased to support the Community of Democracies Convening Group Statement for Human Rights Day.

While citizens' desire for individual freedoms can be repressed for a time by authoritarian and corrupt regimes, history shows us that transition is possible — it is, in fact, inevitable. That knowledge bolsters our support for the inalienable rights of freedom-loving people everywhere. Meeting that challenge will require strong cooperation among democratic nations and we stand with those Governments that respect human dignity.

We recognize that each country has a unique history and unique traditions that will lead them on different paths to freedom. Whatever the path or pace, however, the United States will stand with people who seek freedom. Our fight for the promotion and protection of human rights will continue as long as regimes infringe upon the freedom of their citizens. Although that challenge is formidable, we are committed to upholding the principles and practices of democratic systems within which human rights can flourish. Together, we can forge a path toward equality and freedom for all persons around the globe.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Fostering the development of cooperation among States in the area of human rights is enshrined in the United Nations Charter as one of the purposes of the Organization. Taking stock of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, and today being an anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, we should reaffirm our commitment to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which laid the groundwork for building a democratic society, as well as for the development of inter-State dialogue on the protection of human rights. One of the main achievements here is the recognition that the human rights situation in a given country or region can be a source of legitimate concern to the international community, but that that in no way implies a renunciation of generally accepted principles of international law, such as the sovereign equality of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Terrorism is one of those global challenges facing our time that threatens the entire system of

international relations. Unfortunately, proof of that threat can be seen almost on a daily basis. Today, more than ever before, paragraph 17 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is relevant. It declares that the acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are actions aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threatening territorial integrity, the security of States and destabilizing legitimately constituted Governments. Given the global nature of that threat, the entire international community's efforts must be galvanized. At the same time, double standards — dividing terrorists into good and bad categories — are unacceptable. We are convinced that each person has the right to live free of fear and be protected from terrorism. That is why Russia submitted a draft resolution entitled, "Human rights and terrorism", which was adopted by the Third Committee during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The adoption of that important document speaks to the recognition by the international community of the danger that terrorism poses to the human rights protection system at the national, regional and international levels.

We are dealing here with a phenomenon that is truly global, given that the consequences of terrorism affect all aspects of life, without exception. Moreover, the problem of terrorism is, without a doubt, transnational in nature. Not one State, not one member of the international community can feel safe when faced with this threat.

That is why collective responsibility in fighting terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations must be borne, without exception, by all States. Any attempt on the part of a State to isolate itself in an effort to protect itself, or any complacency, could lead to greater vulnerability in facing this danger of terrorism.

Equally important is solidarity and the effort of all players in international relations to counter other negative phenomena that impede universal respect for human rights and freedoms. Such phenomena include problems such as racism, extremism, discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia. Therefore, it is extremely important for us to look at issues, such as, for example, the situation of Russian nationals living abroad. We are determined to continue using all mechanisms that are accepted by international law to ensure enjoyment of the rights and legitimate interests of our nationals abroad. Their destiny and well-being will always be the focus of the Russian State.

We must always bear in mind that human rights and freedoms are universal values, and that is why the discussion of these issues within the United Nations should bring countries closer together to further develop constructive cooperation in humanitarian affairs, taking into consideration regional, cultural and historic traditions. The Russian Federation intends to do its utmost to enhance the development of such relations. That is why we feel that States themselves are responsible for promoting and protecting human rights.

Based on those principles, the Russian Federation cooperates with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, human rights treaties, treaty bodies, special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights, as well as non-governmental organizations in the field of human rights. In December of this year, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights dealing with violence against women will visit the Russian Federation. In February 2005, Mrs. Louise Arbour, the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, will also visit our country, as will the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Commission on contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Insistence on the implementation of its provisions will enhance the work we are doing, and we believe that that is the most important task we have as the United Nations.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): Allow me at the outset to convey my delegation's sincere appreciation for the relevant documentation on this important issue.

In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights agreed on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which stated that human rights education, training and public information are essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. My delegation agrees wholeheartedly with that notion. It is with that in mind that Indonesia supported the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and the plan of action to implement the Decade.

The action by States and others to eradicate illiteracy has provided the framework for the Decade, which emphasizes education as a consistent factor in the multidimensional life of individuals and society — human rights being an integral part of that life. Indonesia will, therefore, continue to promote human rights, since this is mandated by our Constitution and represents part of the foundation of our State. This approach is regarded as necessary to attain a form of civilized humanity; hence, it is deemed a vital part of our nation-building process.

The Indonesian Government attaches the utmost importance to the role of human rights education. In line with our reform process, we are of the view that democracy, development and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Human rights education will result in further effective democratic participation in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of national life and will be utilized as a means of promoting economic and social progress and people-centred sustainable development. Indeed, we believe that promotion of human rights can best be attained through dialogue, both at the national and international levels, rather than by publishing "world reports" or long lists of human rights practices in other Member States, criticizing them for not doing better.

To this end, the President of the Republic of Indonesia formally launched on 25 August 2004 in Jakarta a second National Plan of Action on Human Rights for the period 2004 to 2009. The main objective of the Plan is to ensure the enhancement of respect, promotion, fulfilment and protection of human rights, taking into account the religious values, customs and cultural values of Indonesian people and based on the 1945 Constitution of the Republic. Like the first National Plan of Action, which covered the period 1998 to 2003, the second Plan has established a timetable for the attainment of concrete goals in education on human rights issues.

Within its capacity, and in cooperation with the National Commission on Human Rights and, from time to time, other United Nations member countries, the Government has been conducting a continuing programme to build popular understanding and support for the basic principles of human rights, both nationally and internationally. The level of partnership between the Government and other stakeholders in Indonesia has reached a significant stage. National programmes of action are being constructively discussed, and roles and responsibilities have been mandated, leading towards the full promotion and protection of human rights.

Working through more than 38 centres in various universities throughout the country, there has been considerable dissemination of information and education about human rights. It is the sincere hope of the Government that the involvement of young people in the political, social, and economic life of the society will make them better equipped to help promote and protect human rights.

As prescribed by the Indonesian Plan of Action for the implementation of the United Nations Decade, special attention has also been given to training police officers, prison officials, lawyers, judges, teachers and curriculum developers, the armed forces, international civil servants, development officers and peacekeepers, non-governmental organizations, the media, Government officials, parliamentarians and other groups that are in a particular position to affect or effect the realization of human rights. In addition, the Government has been conducting similar programmes in informal institutions, such as social and religious bodies. This action springs from the conviction that many human rights violations occur because of lack of knowledge or understanding of specific human rights principles.

The Indonesian Government's commitment to human rights awareness as a never-ending process is reflected in its strong commitment to providing national support and guidance where necessary. We also see the need to continue operating within a global framework in promoting human rights education, especially within the context of internationally agreed goals such as universal access to basic education for all by the year 2015.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): Slovenia fully associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. I should like to add some brief remarks in my national capacity.

Ten years ago, Slovenia wholeheartedly supported the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004. Today, at its end, we welcome this opportunity to take a good and honest look back at the achievements — but also at the shortcomings — in the implementation of the Decade. The past 10 years have certainly

reinforced the importance of human rights education and learning. While numerous activities have taken place during that period, we also need to acknowledge that much more remains to be done.

That is certainly true in my own country, Slovenia, as it is regionally and globally. Too many of the women and men, young people and children whose human rights have been recognized lack knowledge of those rights. We therefore welcome the proclamation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. As the Programme is to begin on 1 January 2005, we hope that the draft plan of action for the first phase of the Programme, prepared jointly by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, will be issued in final form and distributed to Member States as soon as possible.

As we observe Human Rights Day today, I wish in particular to acknowledge the contributions that civil society has made and is continuing to make to human rights education and learning. We would have preferred that today's debate could also have been open to the voices of civil society and of human rights educators. Education and learning about human rights and fundamental freedoms is, by definition, a process that should be all-inclusive: it should be continuous and equally open to all. Governmental efforts in this field will be fully successful only if they enjoy widespread recognition and support in the societies concerned. We should all strive together to develop a new political culture based on human rights.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the Global Appeal for Human Rights Learning, issued today and signed by eminent personalities from around the world, including a number of Nobel Peace Prize laureates and world leaders. The Global Appeal, inter alia, calls for actions that enable all people to understand human rights and that make human rights learning a dynamic and powerful force to fulfil the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The text of the Global Appeal and the list of its signatories are being distributed to members along with the text of Slovenia's statement.

Finally, as Slovenia will shortly assume the chairmanship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), I should like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that we plan, in that capacity, to make human rights education one of the priorities of our chairmanship. The OSCE has numerous commitments relating to human rights education and training, and Slovenia intends to build upon those commitments. As incoming Chair, Slovenia is considering the possibility of developing an operational project on human rights education for schoolchildren in the OSCE area. At the same time, we wish to welcome the Council of Europe's initiative to make 2005 the European Year of Citizenship through Education, and to express our belief that international organizations need to work together in the area of human rights education and learning. Last but not least, Slovenia fully subscribes to the relevant activities taking place within the Human Security Network, which were described in detail by the representative of Canada during today's debate.

Mr. Kim San-hoon (Republic of Korea): Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948, the concept of human rights has greatly evolved, progressing from an abstract principle to a widely accepted norm of human society. Today, we gather to celebrate that progress and to assess the challenges that remain in our quest to make human rights truly universal. In commemorating this year's international Human Rights Day, my delegation would like to pay special tribute to those who have been at the forefront of human rights education and have contributed to the global culture of human rights.

This year's Human Rights Day holds special meaning, as it marks the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004. While we close the book on that important Decade, we nevertheless resolve to continue our work aimed at strengthening human rights education in the years to come.

Significant accomplishments have indeed been achieved during the past decade. Among other things, public awareness of the importance of human rights education has increased considerably. Many Governments have taken steps to incorporate human rights education into their broader educational programmes. Those measures have included, inter alia, the development and revision of school curricula to reflect human rights norms, the revision of textbooks to eliminate stereotypes, and teacher training in human rights principles. Furthermore, human rights education

has served to empower vulnerable communities by advancing the idea that all human beings possess inherent dignity and are entitled to live free from discrimination and violence.

Nonetheless, many challenges still remain. Overcoming long-entrenched ideas and practices that are antithetical to human rights is a difficult task that requires much hard work. Moreover, the physical and environmental challenges of our time — such as poverty, conflict, terrorism and HIV/AIDS — make the task of promoting and protecting human rights even more difficult. Clearly, much work remains to be accomplished if we are to fully translate international human rights standards into a reality for all peoples.

Accordingly, my delegation fully supports the recommendation made by the Commission on Human Rights to proclaim a World Programme for Human Rights Education beginning in January 2005. We are confident that the draft plan of action for the first phase — 2005-2007 — of the World Programme will advance the collective goal of making human rights a reality for all.

During the past decade, the Republic of Korea has joined other countries in incorporating human rights education into our national policies. The National Human Rights Commission of Korea, which was established as an independent body in 2001, has played a major role in setting up a framework for human rights education. In 2003, the Commission established a five-year plan for human rights education that serves as a road map towards a society in which human rights are fully respected. Based on our own experiences, we would like to offer our views on a few points related to human rights education.

To begin with, we believe that human rights education must be comprehensive in scope. The indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights must be emphasized. All rights — including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights — should be promoted in a comprehensive and integrated manner. At the same time, human rights education must target all segments of society, including, inter alia, women, children, minorities, persons with disabilities, so that they may be fully aware of their individual rights and enjoy those rights.

Furthermore, the interdependence between human rights, development and democracy, which was enshrined in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, must continue to guide our efforts. Recognition of this link is also essential to our collective pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals.

The importance of early human rights education in the school system cannot be overemphasized. At the same time, human rights education needs to be understood within the broader process of socialization to promote a culture of tolerance and respects for others. Human rights education must continue throughout all phases of an individual's life, not only through the formal education system but also through other means of education. It is important to establish a partnership among Government agencies, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in developing, implementing and evaluating national human rights policies.

Finally, international cooperation in human rights education must be further strengthened. In particular, greater attention must be devoted to networking in the field of human rights education among Governments, non-governmental organizations and regional organizations in order to promote the sharing of their experiences.

In conclusion, my delegation underscores the importance of continuing to strive for universal observance of human rights norms. Respect for human rights is both fundamental to our shared humanity and an obligation to our fellow human beings. For its part, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to working towards a world in which human rights are universally accepted and respected.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The Kingdom of Morocco is pleased to be participating once again in the celebration of international Human Rights Day. It goes without saying that the United Nations system has been playing, and continues to play, a central role in the protection and promotion of human rights throughout the world by placing the interests and well-being of peoples the heart of its concerns. This very important topic of human rights education seems especially appropriate to us this year.

Education is a basic right for everyone, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It should aim to ensure the full realization of the potential of the individual, strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and foster comprehension,

tolerance and friendship among all nations. These same purposes and principles have been reaffirmed in the vast majority of international human rights instruments and in all human- rights-related events that have taken place.

The proclamation by the General Assembly in 1995 of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education focused to an even greater degree the attention of the international community on this high-priority issue. A general agreement has now been reached as concerns the importance of human rights education to the building of democratic societies that respect the fundamental principles of human rights. Indeed, educating children, from a very young age, about universal values pertaining to human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as to gender equality and tolerance can considerably strengthen the promotion of the principles of democracy and good governance and foster the advent of a culture of peace and dialogue among different civilizations and different religions.

It is thus evident that, by instilling the values of democracy and respect for human rights, human rights education can make a significant contribution to the establishment and consolidation of the rule of law, which has remained a primary focus of the efforts of the United Nations since its inception. That would promote respect on the part of all States for the fundamental rights of peoples and ensure that relations among States are governed by international law.

We note with satisfaction the gains made, at both the national and the international levels, as a result of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. We urge all States to make concrete efforts towards the full realization of the goals of the Decade and to undertake initiatives to ensure that due attention continues to be paid to this issue, in particular through the launching of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, starting on 1 January 2005.

I shall turn now to the case of my own country, Morocco. Morocco has for many years been making considerable efforts to improve its educational system to enable it to meet the requirements of Moroccan society, in an international context that is increasingly characterized by globalization.

I should like to stress, in that context, the adoption by Morocco of a national charter on education and training, which has promoted substantial reform in its educational system. The charter is aimed, inter alia, at expanding education and aligning it with economic realities; improving the quality of education and training; maximizing the potential of human resources; restructuring teaching methods; and establishing innovative partnerships with the various actors involved. Moreover, within the framework of the economic and social development plan for 2000-2004, which has just reached its conclusion, a national strategy to combat illiteracy has been set up that aims to gradually eliminate that scourge by the year 2015, in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals.

Morocco has made concrete contributions at the national, regional and international levels to the implementation and attainment of the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004. In 1994, a partnership agreement was concluded between the Moroccan Ministry for Human Rights and the Ministry for National Education, in order to develop and implement a national programme on human rights education. The programme trained more than 3,000 teachers through over 100 training sessions. It also revised textbooks, aligning their content with the universal principles of human rights and gender equality. This programme is now being spread to all schools in Morocco and has led to the development of over 130,000 curricula in all subjects.

Given the importance of training the State's law enforcement personnel, human rights courses have been developed and are now being taught in schools, in military and police academies and in the national institute for judicial studies, which trains judges. Moreover, in order to incorporate human rights education into institutions of higher learning, and in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, chairs on human rights and peace issues have been created in every university in Morocco.

At a regional level, and within the framework of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the midway review of the United Nations Decade on Human Rights Education, I take this opportunity to recall that, in 1999, Morocco organized a conference on human rights education in Arab countries. The Rabat conference culminated in the adoption of the Rabat Declaration, which provided a basis for Arab regional strategies to be developed in human rights education.

Moreover, with a view to strengthening and promoting fruitful cooperation with the United Nations system, Morocco established, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme, a centre in Rabat for human rights documentation, training and information. Among its purposes is to organize training sessions on human rights for all civil society actors. Training is being provided, in particular, for corrections personnel, judges, law enforcement, journalists and all non-governmental organizations. The centre is also trying to disseminate a culture of human rights through its various publications and is now developing a collection of documents, which it has made available to the public.

It is important to point out that our official endeavours depend on civil society. All activities are in partnership with civil society in order to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, including through sustained efforts to instil a culture of human rights in the thinking and everyday lives of the various segments of society.

In conclusion, we must recognize that tomorrow's world, which is already here — the world of the twenty-first century — is being formed in schools today, as we see children opening their eyes to the new millennium. This world must be prepared and given form in today's schools through far-sighted programmes that bear in mind the great themes of the future.

Mr. Leu (Republic of Moldova): My delegation is pleased to participate in today's event commemorating international Human Rights Day and to take part in the inauguration of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the draft plan of action, to which my country fully subscribes. We commend the Secretary-General and the entire United Nations for their efforts during the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004.

During the Decade, the Republic of Moldova ratified most of the international human rights instruments, including all the core United Nations human rights conventions, the relevant treaties, protocols and conventions of the Council of Europe and the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization. Subsequently, our national legislation was modified and adjusted to accord with the internationally recognized norms and standards in this regard.

As we advance on the path of democratic and economic reform, we clearly realize the need to improve human rights education. Therefore, at the end of last year, my country adopted a national action plan for the promotion of human rights. This document, developed in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and with the helpful advice kindly offered by the Governments of Sweden and Lithuania, contains recommendations and identifies practical steps on how to further improve the situation. A substantial part of the plan is dedicated to education for all in the domain of human rights.

Since the adoption of the national action plan, a series of practical steps have been undertaken. In particular, we would like to mention the conclusion a few days ago of the agreement on partnership and cooperation between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova and the Moldovan branch of Amnesty International. We consider this agreement very important, since it is the first document at such a level signed in the Republic of Moldova between a governmental institution and a non-governmental organization. It creates a basis for further common actions by the Government and civil society in the domain of human rights education. It provides for, inter alia, the elaboration and implementation of the relevant teaching programmes for all levels of education — from pre-school to post-university — the editing of manuals and handbooks, exchanges of information and the dissemination of best practices. We believe that this development can be considered as one of the first practical steps towards the implementation of the World Programme and the draft plan of action that are going to be adopted today.

Mr. Ballestero (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Fifty-six years ago, the General Assembly united in a declaration of hope and common sense. In a clear-sighted response to a period of shame and barbarism, it recognized that the inherent dignity of human beings and the respect for the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family are the basis on which freedom, justice and peace in the world are grounded.

In proclaiming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common ideal for which all peoples

and nations should struggle so that individuals and institutions alike would promote respect for the rights and freedoms articulated in that instrument, the men and women representing our States clearly established that teaching and education were the proper ways to achieve that laudable end.

Convinced of that argument, Costa Rica joined with the Namibian delegation in 1994 to promote the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, whose results we are now reviewing together. At that time, we all agreed that human rights education should not be confined to providing information, but that it should be an integrated process which would last a lifetime, and whereby individuals at all levels of development and in all strata of society would learn to respect the dignity of others, and the ways and means of ensuring respect for those rights in all societies.

Today, at the dawn of a new millennium, we must, without question, reaffirm our conviction and our commitment. Human rights will remain merely formalized sayings if they are not known and, even more important, absorbed by the possessors of those rights. For all of us, and for all our peoples, this requires a close and insoluble relationship between human rights education and the effectiveness of those rights.

The promotion and defence of each and every one of our rights will be impossible, laughable, illusory if we are not aware of their existence and of the mechanisms available to ensure their full enjoyment. Hence, it is no exaggeration to say that the foundation of any human rights edifice is the dovetailing of the right to life and the right to education.

A principal purpose of the Decade that is coming to an end was to bring the question of human rights education onto the agenda. It has contributed to raising awareness of the need for such education and created a framework for international cooperation in that important area. Although we acknowledge the importance of those achievements, we firmly believe that much remains to be done, and that all of us must work to do it.

In that regard, Costa Rica welcomes the draft plan of action for the first phase, 2005-2007, of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, prepared jointly by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. At the same time, Costa Rica regrets the fact that that important document, the outcome of commendable efforts and the source of high expectations, was issued late as an official document, thus making it impossible for the draft plan of action to be adopted at present. We hope that delegations that have thus far not been able to comment on the draft plan of action will do so very soon, so that it may be adopted without further delay.

We also welcome the analysis and conclusions reached by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Katarina Tomasevski, in her report (E/CN.4/2004 and Add.1 and 2). We agree with her that giving priority to human rights is an important complement to the attention being given worldwide to education, since it means that we must ask ourselves about the objective of education, or, as she put it, "education for what?" (*E/CN.4/2004/45, p. 2*).

A few days ago in San José, Costa Rica, on the occasion of the Ibero-American Summit, heads of State or Government of the 21 countries of Ibero-America responded to that question by reaffirming that education is a fundamental and inalienable human right whose purpose is to achieve the full development of individuals and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. As our Presidents stated, education is a key instrument to promote development and equality. Democratic, accessible and high-quality education is the basis for achieving sustainable development, increasing productivity, taking advantage of scientific and technological progress, strengthening cultural identity and building the values of democratic coexistence in peace and solidarity in order to reduce poverty and to narrow the social divide.

When the Assembly decided by consensus in 1994 to create the position of a High Commissioner for the promotion and protection of all human rights, it expressly recognized that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. For that reason, we should devote the same attention and importance to them all.

Education is the vehicle that makes it possible to give effect to that assertion, bridging the dichotomy that divides civil and political rights from economic, social and cultural rights, thus making it possible to take a holistic approach which underpins the

conceptual universality of those rights and denies the inevitability of inequality and poverty.

With that conviction, the President of Costa Rica, Abel Pacheco, indicated at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly that

> "The twenty-first century should be devoted to making freedom universal and consolidating economic development, but, above all, to creating an opportunity for social justice, international cooperation, equitable relations among nations and the eradication of poverty." (*A/59/PV.3, p. 24*)

In that regard, Costa Rica welcomes the global challenge issued by the People's Movement for Human Rights Learning, and we associate ourselves with that appeal with a view to ensuring that all people worldwide, through dialogue, interaction and learning, take a qualitative leap forward from information to knowledge, and from knowledge to the realization of the imperatives of social justice and economic justice embodied in the framework of human rights.

In conclusion, in a rich world that is full of people who are poor, and a world in which information is measured in megas and gigas and in which the illiterate are numbered in hundreds of millions, we must reaffirm that only through commitment and concerted action that engages the international community, our Governments and civil society will we be able to move forward in the endless struggle to ensure the pre-eminence of all human rights for all the inhabitants of our planet, without distinction or discrimination of any kind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/59/L.43, entitled "World Programme for Human Rights Education". Before the Assembly takes action on the draft resolution, I would like to note that since it was submitted, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/59/L.43: Bangladesh, Bolivia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Iraq, Jordan, Mali, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Romania, Suriname and Tunisia.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/59/L.43?

Draft resolution A/59/L.43 was adopted (resolution 59/113).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this meeting dedicated to the review of the achievements of the United Nations Decade on Human Rights Education, and the present stage of its consideration of agenda item 105 (b).

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.